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RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE  
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STATE FOR EUR/SCE (MBENEDICT/DSAINZ)  
USUN PLEASE PASS TO AMB. WISNER  
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SUBJECT: ALBANIA SCENESETTER FOR AMB. WISNER, U.S. SPECIAL ENVOY TO KOSOVO NEGOTIATIONS

REF: A. TIRANA 312

1B. TIRANA 276

1C. 05 TIRANA 1516

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Albanian governments, past and present, support independence for Kosovo, but within the international framework. In contrast to generally quiet diplomacy of the past, the Berisha government, via FM Mustafaj (and Sabri Godo, his informal advisor on Kosovo), has more openly and publicly voiced this support. President Moisiu, who has also privately made clear his support for independence without delay, has also been more outspoken on this issue. Nevertheless, except for a recent slip on border changes by the Foreign Minister (Reftel B), Albanian officials have always publicly called for moderation when necessary, supported UN negotiations and UNMIK, and made protection of the rights of minorities government policy. The Berisha government's more outspoken approach is a change of style rather than substance, and we do not expect their overall policy of support for the international community's efforts to handle the negotiations to change (Reftel C). During his November 2005 visit here, UN Envoy Ahtisaari called for Albania to be "active, but not an actor in the Kosovo status process." We suggest you reiterate this formulation, express appreciation for Albania's traditionally moderate role on regional issues, and apprise GOA officials of the sensitivity of the negotiation process. End Summary.

SUPPORT FOR INDEPENDENCE

12. (SBU) Albanian policy toward Kosovo is clear: independence for Kosovo with some form of international supervision in the beginning, no change in borders, strong

protections for the Serb minority, and progress on decentralization. After winning parliamentary elections last summer, Albanian government officials including PM Berisha and FM Mustafaj became more outspoken than their predecessors on the issue of independence for Kosovo. President Moisiu also adopted a more out front style. Berisha conspicuously raised Kosovo during his inaugural address to the Parliament, and FM Mustafaj did the same at last year's UNGA. The President made Kosovo independence a central theme at a gathering of South East European countries on the margins of the UNGA. All three made one clear point: Albania fully supports Kosovar independence within the framework of negotiations between Kosovar authorities and the international community.

¶13. (SBU) Post believes this outspokenness is more a change in style rather than substance. The GOA believes it has a role to play, but remains careful to follow the lead of the international community. Albanian officials, past and present, have expressed their willingness to deliver messages privately and publicly when asked and are eager to use their influence to advance an agenda that includes an independent Kosovo. A recent comment by FM Mustafaj that called into question the "inviolability" of Kosovo's (and Macedonia's) borders if Kosovo were divided might have been a case of speaking without thinking, but was more likely FM Mustafaj trying to balance his insistence on "conditional independence" for which he has taken some heat here. President Moisiu and FM Mustafaj reaffirmed Albanian policy after meeting the new Kosovo PM Haziri late March. Mustafaj, in particular, highlighted "Albanian diplomacy in supporting the negotiation process between Pristina and Belgrade."

#### HOW ALBANIA CAN HELP

¶14. (SBU) Albania can help in two ways. First, Albanian officials have often played a moderate role during difficult times in the region, including the spring 2004 violence. Former PM Nano was extremely helpful last spring when violence threatened in Macedonia after an ethnic Albanian was killed by the police. PM Berisha and President Moisiu have also lent their good offices when asked. The present government is very sensitive to, and concerned about, the potential for extremist violence in the region and, in our view, will be very willing to help should that become a problem.

¶15. (SBU) Second, the new government appears inclined to invest much more personal time and effort in relations with Kosovars than Nano did before them. Thus they can be useful conduits of messages we have, especially in regard to the need for unity amongst the Kosovar negotiating team and for agreeing to concrete measures regarding the Kosovo Serbs. Albanians take a pragmatic view toward the future of the region, which includes a realistic assessment of the important role that Belgrade must, of necessity, play. They also see themselves as having a special mandate to speak positively about respect and tolerance for different religious traditions as they are proud of their own tradition of religious harmony. (Albania is roughly 70% Moslem, 20% orthodox Christian and 10% Roman Catholic).

#### STRONG BELIEF IN U.S. LEADERSHIP

¶16. (SBU) Finally, Albanian officials will not hide their strong support for USG leadership during the negotiation process. Historically, Albania has been pre-disposed to the U.S. position and the same is true regarding our role in the region, and in Kosovo in particular. Albanians still suffer from mines laid by the Serbs in the north of the country, which makes up part of the legacy of the Kosovo war. The other part of that legacy is, of course, the hosting of thousands of Kosovar refugees in Albania during the height of the conflict. Albanian officials will seek your guidance on what role they should play in the status process and will be eager to offer their support in any way we believe will advance the mutual cause of establishing a functional and

independent Kosovo state.

BIO NOTES AND KOSOVO CONNECTIONS

¶7. (SBU) A Northerner, Prime Minister Berisha sees himself as having a special affinity for Kosovo issues. Though he nurtured a strong relationship with Rugova, he did not hesitate to publicly condemn the 2004 riots in much stronger terms than the Kosovo president was willing to use. He has unofficially named Republican Party President emeritus Sabri Godo as an advisor on Kosovo and the resourceful and erudite Godo has spent a good amount of time in Kosovo recently in this capacity. Agim Ceku came to Tirana just before being named PM and met with Berisha, Godo and Defense Minister Mediu over lunch. Personal relationships between Albanian leaders and Kosovar counterparts do tend to follow party lines. While Berisha knows all of the current leaders, Hashim Thaci's closest ties remain with the Socialist Party here, including both Nano and SP Leader (and Tirana mayor) Edi Rama. Former Defense Minister Majko has family in Pristina and is considered the informal "Kosovo expert" in the Socialist camp. President Moisiu is a strong Albanian nationalist. A former military man, he has written a book on Kosovo's history.

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